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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5656  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6170  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2168  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV 0220  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1150  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 1423  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 002739

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS  
TAGS: PGOV PREL EC  
SUBJECT: (C) NOBOA AND AMBASSADOR CLEAR THE AIR

REF: QUITO 2617

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Jewell for reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Presidential front-runner Alvaro Noboa called the Ambassador on November 8 to discuss his campaign and clear up any misunderstandings about his decision not to meet with foreign officials until after the election on November 26. He believed Venezuelan President Chavez' public remarks about him have helped reveal the "true colors" of his opponent. Noboa requested that the conversation remain private, and offered a discreet channel of communication should we need to contact him. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The call came at our request, conveyed through intermediaries, and followed Noboa's public rejection of contact before the election with foreign and national government officials and Catholic Church leaders, in favor of the electorate. In doing so, Noboa was setting himself apart from his opponent's publicized meetings with the Ambassador, Guayaquil Mayor Jaime Nebot, and the Catholic Church hierarchy.

¶3. (C) The tone of the call was cordial, with Noboa explicitly setting aside his initially being somewhat miffed over the Ambassador's October 26 meeting with Correa. The Ambassador thanked Noboa for calling and overcoming any misunderstandings. She expressed the view that USG interests coincide with Noboa's on many important issues, congratulated him on his successful campaign to date, and praised his energetic commitment to grassroots voter outreach all the way to November 26.

¶4. (C) Noboa's said he was "working hard for the country," currently focusing on making inroads in the central highlands region. Thanking God, he claimed Sierra residents were responding well to his presence, diminishing Correa's prior advantage there. He said he felt very secure in his large vote advantage over Correa in the populous coastal region, his own electoral base. Deriding Correa's recent swing through the Amazon region as "a waste of time," Noboa noted that the entire Amazon region had fewer votes than any single highland province. He said Venezuelan president Chavez' remarks had helped him and hurt Correa by "showing his true communist colors."

¶5. (C) Asked whether he believed contact with members of his team responsible for handling FTA issues would be useful, Noboa responded that these contacts were best deferred until after the election on November 26. He also preferred that we not make the fact of this conversation public. Until the election he suggested the Ambassador contact him as necessary by means of his trusted confidant and head of the PRIAN

congressional delegation, Sylka Sanchez.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Noboa is an odd character, and very sensitive to perceived slights. This call, which we understand he was eager to make, showed he is also intelligent enough to sometimes set aside perceived slights to his large but fragile ego and act in his own interest. In tactical electoral terms, Noboa is pursuing a wise strategy in avoiding public encounters with outsiders and perceived power brokers, including us. We will respect his request that we not publicize the call. We are confident of maintaining a close and fluid relationship with Noboa should he win, although his quirks will always be a factor. As president, Noboa's ability to separate personal feelings from politics will increasingly be tested.

JEWELL